

March 2016: Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

This information was compiled by the North Dakota Colorectal Cancer Roundtable to assist healthcare organizations, businesses, and community organizations in sharing a unified statewide message during Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.

[80% by 2018](#) is a national movement in which hundreds of organizations have committed to eliminating colorectal cancer as a major public health problem and are working toward the shared goal of reaching 80% of the eligible U.S. population screened for colorectal cancer by 2018. In North Dakota, 42% of adults are not up to date with colorectal cancer screening. Your organization can help spread the word about the importance of screening with the below messaging:

General Messaging

Colon cancer symptoms checklist

Much of the time, colon cancer does not have symptoms, especially at its earliest stages. However, if you are experiencing one or more of the following symptoms, set up an appointment with your doctor.

- Unusual change in bowel habits, like diarrhea or constipation or a change in the consistency of your stool
- Bleeding in your rectum or blood in your stool
- Persistent stomach pain, cramps or gas
- Feeling like you need to have a bowel movement when you don't
- Prolonged weakness or fatigue
- Unexplained weight loss

Get screened

The small inconvenience of a colonoscopy pales in comparison to the disease. Because of where it grows, this cancer is prone to perforating your colon and spreading to other parts of your body. Thanks to screening tools, you can avoid becoming a statistic.

What is the first sign of colon cancer?

In its earliest stages, colon cancer generally shows no physical symptoms. That's why colonoscopies are so important because they can detect possible cancer in the form of polyps. Polyps are tiny, pimple-like growths found in the colon that – if left undetected – can be cancerous and grow benign and malignant tumors. These tumors can then spread throughout the body if nothing is done to screen, prevent or treat them.

What are the risk factors for colon cancer?

Age. People older than age 50 tend to get colon cancer more frequently than those younger than 50.

Family history. If you have a parent, sibling or child who has or had colon cancer, you may have a greater risk.

Obesity. People who are overweight or obese are more likely to develop colon cancer, among other diseases.

Lack of exercise. People who don't get their heart pumping tend to develop colon cancer and other diseases.

Smoking. Tobacco use has been shown to increase the likelihood of getting colon cancer.

Alcoholism. Heavy use of alcohol also increases the chances of developing many diseases, including those of the colon.

When to screen

Depending on your risk factors, your doctor may want to devise an individual plan for colorectal cancer screening. For the general public, however, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest:

- Regular screening for those between the ages of 50 and 75
- Fecal occult blood testing – yearly
- Sigmoidoscopy – every five years
- Colonoscopy – every 10 years
- After age 75, work with your doctor

Sources:

Mayoclinic.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Social Media Messaging

50 or older? Get screened for colon cancer. It could save your life. #coloncancer #80by18ND

There are several colon cancer screening options available, including simple take home options. Talk to your doctor about getting screened. #80by18ND

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in the U.S., when men and women are combined, yet it can be prevented or detected at an early stage. Get Screened. #80by18ND

Preventing colorectal cancer or finding it early, doesn't have to be expensive. There are simple, affordable tests available. Get screened! Call your doctor today. #80by18ND

Colorectal cancer: A cancer we can prevent, treat and beat. #coloncancer #80by18ND

March is colon cancer prevention month. Have the guts to prevent colon cancer & get screened. #coloncancer #80by18ND

INFORMATION PULLED FROM THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS TOOLKIT:

Email Messages

*Begin promoting National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month on
March 1, 2016, by sending information to all your employees with email access.*

Email #1:

Subject: A Cancer That Regular Testing Can Help Prevent

In our continued commitment to the health and well-being of our employees, [Company Name] is proud to join the American Cancer Society® in recognizing National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month throughout the month of March. Together, we can do everything possible to help prevent colorectal cancer – and all cancers, including encouraging screening for early detection.

If you're 50 or older, one of the most important steps you can take is to get screened for colon cancer. Everyone in this age group should talk to a health care provider about getting screened, even if no one in your family has had it. If your parent, sibling, or child has ever had colon cancer or colon polyps, you might need to start screening before age 50. Be sure to ask about the [different ways you can be screened](#) and when you should start. There are several ways to be screened, including simple take home tests.

For more information about colon cancer and what you can do to help prevent it or find it early, visit cancer.org/colon or call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345. We're there when you need us – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. (Source: American Cancer Society)

Email #2:

Subject: Preventing colon cancer or finding it early

Regular screening can often find colon cancer early, when it's small, has not spread, and is easier to treat. For many people, having these tests can help prevent colorectal cancer altogether. This is because some polyps, or growths, can be found and removed before they turn into cancer. Preventing colorectal

cancer, or finding it early, doesn't have to be expensive, either. Some tests are simple, affordable, and can be done at home.

Tests for colorectal cancer include:

- **Guaiaac-based fecal occult blood test (gFOBT)** and the **fecal immunochemical test (FIT)**: Samples of stool (poop) are checked for blood, which might be a sign of a polyp or cancer.
- **Stool DNA test (sDNA)**: A stool sample (poop) is checked for certain abnormal sections of DNA (genetic material) from cancer or polyp cells.
- **Sigmoidoscopy**: A flexible, lighted tube is put into the rectum and lower colon to look for polyps and cancer.
- **Colonoscopy**: A longer, flexible tube is used to look at the entire colon and rectum.
- **Double-contrast barium enema**: This is an x-ray test of the colon and rectum.
- **CT colonography (virtual colonoscopy)**: This is a type of CT scan of the colon and rectum.

For more information about these tests and the steps you can take to help prevent colorectal cancer, visit cancer.org/colon or call the American Cancer Society® at 1-800-227-2345. We're there when you need us – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. (Source: American Cancer Society)

Email #3

Subject: Learn Your Family's Health History

About 96% of Americans believe that knowing their family's health history is important to their own health – that it could, in fact, help save their lives. But only one-third of them have ever tried to gather and organize their families' health history, according to the US Department of Health & Human Services.

Your doctor can use your family health history to:

- Estimate your risk for certain medical conditions.
- Recommend treatments and lifestyle changes.
- Determine what tests and screenings you should have.
- Identify conditions that otherwise might not be considered.

- Assess possible health risks for your children.

Ideally, your family health history should include the following information about each relative for at least 3 generations:

- Sex (male/female)
- Date of birth (the approximate year of birth is usually enough)
- Current age or, if the relative is no longer living, cause of death and age at death
- Diseases or medical conditions (including any history of colon polyps)
- If the relative had cancer (What type? How old were they when they were diagnosed?)
- Any known behavioral factors, including diet, exercise, smoking and drinking habits, and any weight problems

Here are some websites that might be helpful if you are interested in putting together your family's health history:

- **Mayo Clinic**
[Instructions for Compiling Family Medical Tree](#)
- **Colon Cancer Alliance**
[Family Health History Tree - Free Download](#)
- **Surgeon General's Family Health History Initiative**
[My Family Health Portrait Tool – Free Download](#)

Make your health a priority by learning more about what you can do to help prevent some forms of cancer. For information, visit cancer.org/healthy or call the American Cancer Society® at 1-800-227-2345. We're there when you need us – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. (Source: American Cancer Society)

Colorectal Cancer Awareness Newsletter Inserts

Newsletter Insert #1

Title: Do you know the symptoms of colorectal cancer?

Colorectal cancer may cause one or more of the symptoms listed below. You should see your health care provider if you have any of the following:

- A change in bowel habits, such as diarrhea, constipation, or narrowing of the stool, that lasts for more than a few days
- A feeling that you need to have a bowel movement that's not relieved when you go.
- Rectal bleeding
- Blood in your stool, which may make it look dark
- Cramping or belly pain
- Weakness and tiredness
- Unintended weight loss

Most of these problems are caused more often by conditions other than colorectal cancer, such as infection, hemorrhoids, irritable bowel syndrome, or inflammatory bowel disease. Still, if you have any of these symptoms, it's important to see a health care provider right away so the cause can be found and treated, if needed.

To learn more about the signs of symptoms of colon cancer and what you need to do to help prevent it, visit [cancer.org/colon](https://www.cancer.org/colon) or call the American Cancer Society® at 1-800-227-2345. We're there when you need us – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. (Source: American Cancer Society)

Newsletter Insert #2

Title: Why Is It Important to Get Screened for Colorectal Cancer?

Regular colorectal cancer screening is one of the most powerful weapons for helping to prevent colorectal cancer or finding it early, when it's easier to treat.

There are 2 types of screening tests:

- **Tests that mainly find cancer:** These test your stool (poop) for signs that cancer may be present. These tests are easier, but they are also less likely to detect polyps.

- **Tests that can find both colorectal polyps and cancer:** These tests look at the inside of your colon to find any abnormal areas. Colonoscopy and sigmoidoscopy fall in this group, along with double-contrast barium enema and CT colonography (virtual colonoscopy). These tests are preferred if they are available and you are willing to have them.

Removing polyps can help prevent colorectal cancer from ever starting. And cancers found while they are small and before they have spread (in an early stage), are easier to treat. Nine out of 10 people whose colorectal cancer is discovered early will be alive 5 years later. And many will live a normal life span. But all too often people don't get any of these screening tests. Then the cancer can grow and spread without being noticed. Early on, colorectal cancer doesn't usually cause any changes (symptoms) that are noticed. In most cases, by the time people do have symptoms the cancer is advanced and very hard to treat. Regular screening is the most reliable way to find these cancers in the early stages. Ask a health care provider about the best screening plan for you.

For more about the steps you can take to find colon cancer early, visit cancer.org/colon or call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345. We're there when you need us – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. (Source: American Cancer Society)

Newsletter Insert #3

Title: Have you hit the big 5-0? It's time to get tested!

Are you or is someone you care about 50 or older? Then it's time to talk with a health care provider about getting screened for colorectal cancer.

The American Cancer Society® recommends that everyone 50 and older be tested regularly. If you have family members with colorectal cancer or colon polyps, you should ask about getting tested at an earlier age.

Many people aren't getting the tests that could help save their lives because they're afraid the tests may be embarrassing or painful.

The fact is, these tests are almost always neither embarrassing nor painful. Some of the tests, such as [colonoscopy](#), can help doctors find polyps. Polyps are small growths in the colon that can develop into cancer over time. Colonoscopy is often recommended because it looks at the entire colon and because,

if a polyp is found, it can be removed during the procedure. Colonoscopy is done while you are sedated (often asleep), so it's not painful. Stool tests are another option, and you can do these tests in the privacy of your own home. Click here to watch a [short video](#) about these and other colorectal cancer screening tests.

Preventing colorectal cancer, or finding it early, doesn't have to cost a lot of money. Simple, affordable tests are available. Don't wait – talk to your health care provider today.

To learn more about the steps you can take to help find colorectal cancer early, visit cancer.org/colon or call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345. We're there when you need us – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. (Source: American Cancer Society)

Colorectal Cancer Awareness Social Media Messages

Staff who manage social media channels are encouraged to share and post the suggested Facebook posts and Tweets below.

Suggested Facebook posts

1. Help finish the fight against colorectal cancer. Here are things you can do every day to reduce your risk of getting #coloncancer:

- Stay at a healthy weight.
- Be physically active.
- Eat plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.
- Limit the amount of red and processed meat you eat, including pork and lunch meats.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink to no more than 2 drinks per day for men and 1 drink per day for women.
- Do not smoke or use any form of tobacco.

To learn more about colon cancer and how to reduce your risk, visit cancer.org/fightcoloncancer . #80by18ND

2. Help finish the fight against #coloncancer. If you are 50 or older, get tested for colon cancer, even if you have no family history. Colorectal cancer is one of only 2 cancers that can actually be prevented through regular screening tests. To find out more, visit cancer.org/fightcoloncancer . #80by18ND

3. Many people with #colorectal cancer have no symptoms or family history, which is why screening is so important even when you feel healthy. Get screened. cancer.org/fightcoloncancer #80by18ND

4. Did you know that there are many different choices for #coloncancer testing, including simple take-home tests? Read this article to find out what they are, and talk to your health care provider about the right test for you. <http://bit.ly/1DZqgNR> #80by18ND

5. Don't let these 5 common myths stop you from getting the lifesaving tests you need, when you need them. <http://bit.ly/VIsNeo> #80by18ND

Suggested Tweets

50 or older? @AmericanCancer recommends you get regular screening tests for #coloncancer. They could save your life. #80by18ND cancer.org/fightcoloncancer

When it comes to #coloncancer screening, you have choices! Find out what they are. #80by18ND <http://bit.ly/1DZqgNR>

If you are 50 or older, get tested for #coloncancer, even if you have no family history. #80by18ND cancer.org/fightcoloncancer

You have the power to #finishthefight against #coloncancer. Learn about screening and reducing your risk: cancer.org/fightcoloncancer #80by18ND

Together, we're making progress against #coloncancer. When you support @AmericanCancer, you're helping #finishthefight. #80by18ND cancer.org/fightcoloncancer

The North Dakota Colorectal Cancer Roundtable, co-lead by the American Cancer Society and the North Dakota Department of Health, is a statewide coalition of organizations dedicated to reducing the incidence of and mortality from colorectal cancer in our state, through coordinated leadership and strategic planning. The ultimate goal of the state's Roundtable is to increase the use of proven colorectal cancer screening tests among the entire population for whom screening is appropriate.

